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Anthony Marr, Founder and President  
Heal Our Planet Earth (HOPE)  
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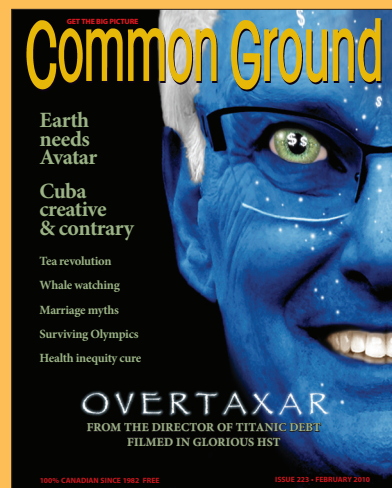
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## IN EVERY ISSUE

### CULTURE

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**FILMS WORTH WATCHING** Robert Alstead

I've been wondering what it will take to get our modern world to become more sustainable. With ever greater pushes towards instant gratification, I feel like we're getting further away from our necessary goal of "limiting" ourselves. Same-day delivery, food of every kind and information at our fingertips all make our quality of life feel great, but at what cost? In order to have things instantly, considerable expenditures of energy need to be readily available. Everything has to come from somewhere.

Many of the crises of our times, and I predict into our future, hinge on our relationship to resource use. The world we live in isn't infinite. Petroleum, technological innovation, drought and famine are all inter-related. As our global population increases, so too do the needs and wants of the dominant species. We're not the only ones who feel entitled to iPhones and SUVs and flat-screens with digital-on-demand entertainment; there is a growing world with budding First World tastes. Whether or not we believe in climate change, it is only common sense to err on the side of caution and curtail our excessive resource extraction/use and environmental degradation. In a time when we are constantly making history, it is difficult to see our place in it. We are forgetting our place in a continuum and there will be a legacy from what we do or don't do **now**.

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A sort of wait and see approach will not prevent potential catastrophe. If we want to keep ramping-up our ability to access instantaneously, we need to find cleaner, renewable sources to fill that hunger. Even then it may not be enough, although if we can somehow become content with less, whatever we gather may sustain us.

The answers to our sustainability concerns are varied. Government and private sectors need to be developing clean answers to our dirty problems. Individually we need to become more responsible for how we travel, the food we eat (growing some of it too) and in making the decisions we will face about how we commit our planet to our service. When these kinds of concerns feel hopeless, let's remember that together we have power in shaping the solutions. makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently, he is doing what he can for himself and the planet. contactishi@yahoo.ca

mand entertainment; there is a growing world with budding First World tastes. Whether or not we believe in climate change, it is only common sense to err on the side of caution and curtail our excessive resource extraction/use and environmental degradation. In a time when we are constantly making history, it is difficult to see our place in it. We are forgetting our place in a cont





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## Neglected people, overlooked diseases

### Deplorable lack of healthcare equity in the developing world

**DRUG BUST** Alan Cassels

**I**NEQUITY. It's a damnable word, a cruel word. A word that characterizes the most distasteful, egregious thing that we humans tolerate – namely, the very inequitable way human health is distributed across our planet. One part of the world drowns in medicines and potions for the most trivial of 'diseases' and conditions while the other part of the world dies for the lack of the most basic of life-sustaining things: clean water, adequate food, basic medicines. Inequity in the world is at the heart of the great divide between those who will live long and productive lives and those who won't. Inequity is irascible, callous and shameful. It is entirely human-created and its existence diminishes our humanity.

Not only does modern society seem to accept inequity, but our policies also tend to breed it. Even as we delude ourselves with lofty pronouncements and say we are working hard to reduce inequity, in reality, we mostly just tolerate it.

Last year, the world witnessed humanity's capacity to rise to a challenge in the face of a perceived global health emergency, an outpouring that included enormous amounts of most everything that counts: human ingenuity, advanced science and medicine, media attention and public and private money – all to combat a *potential* global influenza pandemic. Without mentioning that much of this might have been a waste, we can say with certainty that the pandemic taught us one key lesson: there are no limitations on resources if we feel our health is being threatened. When we're talking about *our* health – those of us in the rich part of the world – the sky, literally, is the limit.

The reality of life for those on the other side of the inequity divide – the world's poorest countries – is the daily grappling with real epidemics, which leaves nothing extraneous to put towards a health risk that is merely a "potential" emergency. There, several million people die every year from diseases due to poor community hygiene and lack of clean water, in situations where dysentery, cholera and other entirely preventable

water-borne diseases wreak an incredible burden of ill health throughout the developing world.

Can we really understand dire poverty in the same way as the inhabitants of poor countries who witness their children dying of diarrhoea for the lack of 25 cents worth of oral rehydration therapy? It is almost as if 'we' and 'they' lived on separate planets.

Far be it for me to proffer solutions for the most dire problems of planetary inequity, but let me suggest at least two interim suggestions for how Canada and

Canadians could work to reduce that inequity: the first serious and the other more glib.

For immediate needs, we need to be creating more toilets.

Before you go thinking that's the glib answer, consider this: the lack of access to toilets is one of the world's most dire health emergencies. Many diseases of poverty wouldn't survive or thrive if proper human sanitation denied them the opportunity to do so. Effective sanitation has long been recognized by physicians and other health experts around the world as the world's most pressing health issue. Don't believe me?

Almost three years ago, more than 11,000 readers of the prestigious *British Medical Journal* (whose readership consists mostly of physicians) were asked to vote for what they thought were the most important medical advancements in the last 150 years. What won the contest? Antibiotics? Anaesthesia? Vaccines? Nope, nope, nope. Access to clean water and sewage disposal – "the sanitary revolution" – was judged the world's most important medical achievement.

In her book, *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters*, author Rose George notes that access to a toilet is not a laughing matter. It is a matter of life and death. Nearly half the world's population, or about 2.6 billion people, lack access to a toilet and Rose George notes that nearly 80 percent of the world's illnesses are caused by fecal matter. Diarrhoea, the key



*Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria*



## HEALTH

consequence of poor sanitation, is a lethal condition that kills 2.2 million people a year in the developing world – more than AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria.

I thought that such an urgent issue would mean that Canada's development agency CIDA, which dispenses nearly \$3 billion a year in foreign aid, would be a major contributor to the world's sanitation revolution. I was dead wrong. Canadian taxpayer-funded aid, directed towards solutions that flush, gets almost nothing. In fact, the Global Sanitation Fund, claimed as one of the best global sanitation initiatives in existence, has never seen Canada contribute a single penny. That stinks. And, perhaps most of all, it shows Canadian unwillingness to contribute to what is probably seen in development circles as a very 'unsexy' cause. C'mon – saving lives with low-tech, high impact solutions is very, very sexy.

You might say that, after sanitation and clean water, what the poorest of the poor need is access to proper food and medicine. The unique forms of medicine, which

most common tropical diseases.

While pharma companies understandably want a return on investments in research, the lack of any promising commercial returns for diseases of poverty seriously slows the flow of capital needed to develop and deliver those treatments. When you look at the historical development of tropical disease treatments, many were developed by the simple fact that we (we who inhabit the rich 'developed' world) felt threatened. The drugs currently available to prevent and treat malaria emerged out of the American and French experiences in Vietnam, where our scientists were given the resources they needed to create treatments which would keep their soldiers out of harm's way.

The lesson here seems simple: being in foreign places may not be so good for our soldiers' health, but it could be good for the development of treatments for infectious diseases that exist primarily in poor countries. When our armed forces are sent abroad, our governments suddenly become seriously interested in investing in researching new treatments. Am I suggesting we start more wars in

**Can we really understand dire poverty in the same way as the inhabitants of poor countries who witness their children dying of diarrhoea for the lack of 25 cents worth of oral rehydration therapy? It is almost as if 'we' and 'they' lived on separate planets.**

would actually address the neglected diseases that afflict the poor most, are almost nowhere to be seen on the pharmaceutical research and development agenda. Again, inequity raises its ugly head and the poorest are left to suffer.

Modern medical science has been missing-in-action for quite a while when it comes to creating new treatments for diseases afflicting the very poor. According to the medical humanitarian group *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), of all new medicines developed between 1975 and 1999, only one percent was developed for tropical neglected diseases and tuberculosis.

So how do we ramp up the investment in the neglected diseases that most affect the poor?

The major impediment to directing resources towards diseases of the poor is the fact that the drug industry is largely uninterested. There's no money in treating poor people. Some groups, such as the Institute for OneWorldHealth ([www.oneworldhealth.org/](http://www.oneworldhealth.org/)) and MSF's "Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative" ([www.dndi.org](http://www.dndi.org)) have recognized this reality and are on the front lines of using both public and private money to develop novel therapies for some of the

poor countries? Not at all. The easier solution is to import more diseases from the developing world. As I said earlier, there are no resource limitations if we feel our health is being threatened. The only way to get governments in the developing world (where a middle country like Canada can drop a billion and a half dollars on a single flu season) to invest in treatments for neglected diseases is for us to start getting them.

I am proposing it is high time we started 'catching' the same diseases of the poor. Malaria in Southern Alabama? Now here comes some serious antimalarial research. Hmm, maybe that would be a positive side effect to climate change? Tuberculosis outbreak in Toronto? Watch out for the new development of novel antibiotics. Chagas disease in cottage country? Instant research money for that disease.

Last month, I wrote about the drug company Pfizer and its seeming disregard for the law. I left out the part where Pfizer has an active humanitarian side to it. It is an active partner in a number of projects to advance international efforts to create treatments for tropical diseases. Just last November, Pfizer and the "Drugs for Neglected Diseases" *cont'd pg. 34...*

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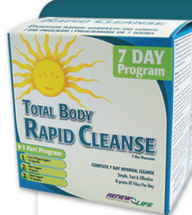
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## The Zero Mile Diet

**ON THE GARDEN PATH** Carolyn Herriot

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." – Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities, 1859*

ONE HUNDRED and fifty one years later, Dickens' words still sum up the state of confusion of the world today. It certainly is confusing to think about dire consequences in the future, as we enjoy the comfort and excess of today's decadent lifestyle. It's easy to ignore or deny the facts and the many warnings telling us that, in order to avoid catastrophe, we need to make a major change in the direction we are heading.

Soaring rates of obesity, diabetes, dementia and cancer are triggering alarm bells for the future. Could it be there is something wrong with our diet? According to a statistic from the Canadian Cancer Society in 2009, 45 percent of men and 44 percent of women will develop cancer and the projected morbidity rate is one in every four Canadians. (<http://www.cancer.ca>)

As a species, over the past 10,000 years we have evolved eating plants grown in healthy soils and ripened under the sun. We are constantly reminded that fruits and vegetables are a vital part of our diet because they are good sources of phytonutrients, which are disease-fighting antioxidants that our bodies depend on to stay healthy.

In comparison with the foods we once ate to evolve, however, let's consider the fruits and vegetables we are eating today, grown in the agri-business model of production. On the surface, they look healthy, but industrial-grown fruits and vegetables (non-organic) show high levels of pesticides and they are either grown in depleted soils or hydroponically, with no soil at all. (Fact: a one percent increase of soil organic matter in the top 12 inches of the soil is equivalent to the capture and storage of 250 tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide per square mile of farmland.)

In the agri-business model, fruits and vegetables are grown under glass,

### ORGANICS

harvested when they are not yet ripe, transported vast distances and stored in warehouses. It is hardly surprising they are found to be low in phytonutrients. Recent trials revealed low levels of phytonutrients in salad greens grown under glass. It was discovered that growing food plants under glass blocked a particular UVB band of sunlight that stimulates production of phytonutrients.

Where I live on Vancouver Island (pop. 750,000), islanders provide less than five percent of the food they consume and the population is set to expand 30 percent by 2025! Ten years ago, in order to pacify my concerns about an increasingly uncertain future, I decided to grow as much food as possible, and, in the process, discovered that it only takes

five years to become self-sufficient in fruits and vegetables, starting from clay fill. I decided to write a book to inspire others and call it the *Zero Mile Diet*.

The *Zero Mile Diet* follows a year of sustainable, home-grown food production – growing healthy organic food, eating seasonal recipes from the garden, saving seeds for future harvests and putting food by

for the winter. Growing the *Zero Mile Diet* is a fun way to increase food security and an opportunity to contribute to regional food production while cooling down the planet. Sometimes, you really do get to feel like Martha Stewart!

Seeing that time is of the essence, I have since expanded my vision for greater food self-sufficiency to the whole of Vancouver Island (a beautiful place, covered with fertile green valleys, where the number one crop is hay). Once the Vancouver Island Food Systems Network connects food producers, we could plan to increase food production to 50 percent and perhaps, in time, we could even create the 'Vancouver Island Diet.'

Carolyn's new book *The Zero Mile Diet – A Year-round Guide to Growing Great Organic Food* (Harbour Publishing) will be released April 2010. <http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath/>







# Building core strength

**NUTRISPEAK** Vesanto Melina MS, RD

**T**HIS MONTH, the proximity of Olympic athletes draws our attention to the pleasure and satisfaction connected with keeping ourselves fit. Vancouver has a wealth of fitness opportunities, with a superb natural environment topping the list.

Provided we have a good rain hat and warm jacket, we can stroll along the ocean, river or any number of tree-lined paths for most of the year. During winter months, many of us turn to yoga, Pilates, aerobics, workouts at the gym or various forms of dance, such as salsa, ballroom, belly dance, contact improvisation or flamenco.

It can help to get some personal coaching to discover one's blind spots and surge past perceived limitations. I have been exploring the benefits of greater core strength, which involves toning abdominal and back muscles, thereby increasing their ability to support the spine and keep the body stable and balanced. This type of strengthening can help reduce back pain, improve posture and trim one's waistline.

Diet also plays a role. Elimination of sugar and refined carbohydrates and engaging in exercise four or more times per week will lead to a leaner, more powerful you. To increase strength, also get plenty of protein. Beans, peas and lentils are ideal sources of abundant protein and they're great for maintenance, muscle building and repair after a sports event. These legumes also give us the

complex carbohydrates that provide staying power between meals. (Whole grains are helpful as pre-game meals for endurance events.)

Based on a recommended protein intake of 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram body weight, each choice listed (see sidebar) provides about one-third of the day's protein for someone weighing 125 pounds, or one quarter of the day's protein for someone weighing 165 pounds. Seasoned athletes sometimes need a little more than this. Someone who is actually gaining muscle mass may need double this amount, though only while the increase in muscle mass is actually happening. (Requirements decrease for maintenance).

It used to be that athletes would eat thick steaks before a competition because they thought it would improve their performance. That thinking is now outdated, however. Like beans, peas and lentils, steaks contain protein and minerals. However, the unique feature of steak is the presence of a lot of fat and cholesterol. For health and environmental reasons, plant sources of protein are the superior choice. For more about sports nutrition guidelines, see [www.vrg.org/nutshell/athletes.htm](http://www.vrg.org/nutshell/athletes.htm)

## Quick Curried Lentils with Tomato

In a saucepan over medium heat, sauté 1 large onion in 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add 1 cup dried red lentils and three cups water; bring to a boil then lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until lentils are soft and easy to eat. Add a 398 ml can (or 2 cups) of tomatoes or tomato sauce and 2 tablespoons of Patak's Mild Curry Paste (or to taste); season with pepper and salt or tamari. Makes 6 cups.

Variations: Green, grey or brown lentils require a longer cooking time (45-60 minutes). Cooked leftover vegetables, such as 2 cups of cauliflower, may be added.

*Vesanto Melina is a local dietitian and co-author of nutrition classics Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Raising Vegetarian Children, the Food Allergy Survival Guide and the Raw Food Revolution Diet. Her newest book, Becoming Raw will be in print by the end of February. For personal consultations, call 604-882-6782 or visit [www.nutrispeak.com](http://www.nutrispeak.com)*

*Vesanto thanks the excellent coach Andrea Welling ([www.momcoach.ca](http://www.momcoach.ca)) and yoga instructor Lynn Wahl ([www.inneravenue.com/workouts.html](http://www.inneravenue.com/workouts.html)) for their input for this month's column.*

## Eating for strength

**Food choices that provide 15 or more grams of protein:**

- 1 veggie burger (check the label; a whole wheat bun adds 4 grams protein)
- 1/2 cup of almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds or peanuts
- 1-1/2 cups Quick Curried Lentils with Tomato (recipe below)
- 1 peanut butter sandwich (2-1/2 tablespoons peanut butter)
- 1 cup chickpeas, edamame, black beans or other beans
- 2 cups of bean salad (assorted beans and vegetables)
- 3 cups cooked brown rice or oatmeal
- 100 g (3/8 cup) firm tofu or tempeh
- 5 to 6 slices of bread (check labels)
- 2 cups spaghetti noodles
- 70 g (about 2 oz) seitan
- 2 cups of green peas



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# the tea revolution

Victoria Tea Festival 2009. Photo by K. Kelly.

**Tea has been shown to boost the immune system and help prevent colds and flu. A link has also been made between tea drinking and the prevention or amelioration of many diseases.**

by Daniela Cubelic

**T**EA SEEMS to be popping up everywhere these days and not just as a beverage. It's also showing up in places where it hasn't ventured before. Tea has found its way into snack bars, energy drinks, nutritional supplements, soft drinks, chocolate bars and skin and body care products. Until recently, adding tea to products such as these would have been unimaginable. You'll also find a vastly increased selection of teas (bagged, loose and bottled) on offer at your local grocer and at cafés and restaurants.

All the examples cited above are indicators of a tea revolution that has been brewing over the past decade or so. Tea has become trendy and it's no longer the staid,

benefits of tea were not scientifically proven. The past decade has changed that. During that time, a great deal of research into the health benefits of tea has demonstrated that tea is very good for us in a number of ways.

Tea has been shown to boost the immune system and help prevent colds and flu. A link has also been made between tea drinking and the prevention or amelioration of many diseases, include lower rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke. A component of green tea, L-theanine, has been found to help you feel calmer, while, at the same time, helping to improve your mental focus and clarity. Who doesn't want to feel more mentally alert and relaxed at the same time? It's the perfect antidote to the hustle and bustle of our stress filled, modern world.

Ongoing scientific studies continue to reveal new evidence that tea is good for us and this factor alone will enhance tea's popularity. The tea plant is chemically complex and works in a multiplicity of ways to boost our overall health and prevent disease.

Another reason tea has become increasingly popular in Canada and across North America is the increased availability of high-quality tea, along with a greater selection of teas to choose from. An emerging group of tea drinkers are developing a passionate interest in tea. As a starting point, in order to become a tea connoisseur, you need access to high quality teas, which can then fuel an interest in teas. When you begin drinking high-quality teas, you realize that the world of tea offers as much diversity and knowledge as wine. And the same varietal grown in different regions will produce dramatically different tasting teas. Teas will change from season to season, being dependent upon soil conditions, altitude, climate and processing methods. There is an infinite variety of flavours in high-quality tea, which can be appreciated, tasted and understood in a similar way to wine.

The growing interest in tea is also stimulating interest in tea culture and tea traditions. What could be described as Canada's "original" tea culture was influenced by our colonial roots so it was very much about the tradition of afternoon tea and drinking black tea. Intriguingly, the renewed popularity of tea overall is reviving the public's interest in afternoon tea and British style traditions. Expect to see more trendy afternoon teas as a younger clientele starts to take over the tearoom. Many women are choosing to host afternoon teas for their bridal or baby showers. The relaxed elegance of afternoon tea transports you to a more civilized and relaxed time and is increasingly sought after as a contrast to the rushed nature of modern life.

Canada's tea culture has become much more international in recent years. The popularization of various teas from other parts of the world often leads to an interest in new tea traditions. In addition to tea made from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, other teas made from herbs (and which are also very high in anti-oxidants), such as Rooibos tea (from South Africa) or Yerba Maté tea (from South America), are rap-

idly gaining ground in Canada as well.

In Asian culture, tea has always been viewed as not just a beverage, but also as a veritable gateway to tranquillity and the spiritual realm. Those elements are also coming into the forefront here. People often begin drinking Matcha tea, (powdered Japanese green tea originally used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony) for its health benefits. From there, many people develop an interest in the



S. Cutler photo

Japanese Tea Ceremony, an ancient ritual that celebrates the simplicity of being in the moment. The exploration of tea ceremonies and an interest in the spiritual dimensions of tea are other trends that are certain to continue.

Discovering tea can be as easy as a visit to Victoria this month. The Victoria Tea Festival, now in its fourth year, is an excellent showcase for the evolution of tea that has taken place. The festival celebrates the trends and traditions of tea, with something for every type of tea drinker, from the novice to the connoisseur, and for people interested in discovering tea's health benefits and exploring tea as a lifestyle. The festival is also expanding to provide more opportunities to experience, learn, sample, touch, smell and inquire about all things related to tea and to engage in an exclusive, interactive and educational tea experience. Steep yourself in tea lore through a complimentary presentation by tea experts who will share their knowledge on the presentation stage.

Tea is here to stay and it's going to get even more interesting. If you haven't started drinking tea yet, the odds are you'll eventually join the tea revolution.

*For more information and to purchase tickets for the Victoria Tea Festival (February 13- 14, Crystal Garden in Victoria), visit [www.victoriateafestival.com](http://www.victoriateafestival.com). Daniela Cubelic is the owner of Silk Road, located in Victoria, BC. Since 1992, Silk Road has imported and blended organic, premium loose teas. Cubelic is a "tea master," who trained with Chinese and Taiwanese tea masters and herbalists. She is also an expert on the culture and history of tea and was named one of Western Canada's "Top 40 Foodies Under 40."*



S. Cutler photo

traditional brew favoured by tea grannies. This transformation is due to several factors, all of which have converged to make tea a drink that has multi-generational appeal, with a whole new class of converts.

In fact, tea isn't just a drink anymore; it has become an ingredient in food, a gateway to tranquillity, an antidote to modern life, a way of exploring other cultures, and ultimately, a lifestyle.

One of the key elements driving this shift has been the widespread recognition of tea's health benefits. Tea comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, which, depending on how the leaves are processed, can produce green, semi-green, oolong, black or white tea.

Since its origin in China, tea has been associated with many healthful properties, but, until recently, the health





# Ability to sustain

THIRTY SOMETHING Ishi Dinim

I'VE BEEN wondering what it will take to get our modern world to become more sustainable. With ever greater pushes towards instant gratification, I feel like we're getting further away from our necessary goal of "limiting" ourselves. Same-day delivery, food of every kind and information at our fingertips all make our quality of life feel great, but at what cost? In order to have things instant-

not prevent potential catastrophe. If we want to keep ramping-up our ability to access instantaneously, we need to find cleaner, renewable sources to fill that hunger. Even then it may not be enough, although if we can somehow become content with less, whatever we gather may sustain us. The answers to our sustainability concerns are varied. Government and private sectors need

We're not the only ones who feel entitled to iPhones and SUVs and flat-screens with digital-on-demand entertainment; there is a growing world with budding First World tastes.

ly, considerable expenditures of energy need to be readily available. Everything has to come from somewhere.

Many of the crises of our times, and I predict into our future, hinge on our relationship to resource use. The world we live in isn't infinite. Petroleum, technological innovation, drought and famine are all inter-related. As our global population increases, so too do the needs and wants of the dominant species. We're not the only ones who feel entitled to iPhones and SUVs and flat-screens with digital-on-demand entertainment; there is a growing world with budding First World tastes. Whether or not we believe in climate change, it is only common sense to err on the side of caution and curtail our excessive resource extraction/use and environmental degradation. In a time when we are constantly making history, it is difficult to see our place in it. We are forgetting our place in a continuum and there will be a legacy from what we do or don't do now.

A sort of wait and see approach will

to be developing clean answers to our dirty problems. Individually we need to become more responsible for how we travel, the food we eat (growing some of it too) and in making the decisions we will face about how we commit our planet to our service. When these kinds of concerns feel hopeless, let's remember that together we have power in shaping the solutions.

## Films worth watching:

*Trouble the Water*  
*District 9*  
*Moon*  
*Hurt Locker*  
*Gomorra*

*Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently, he is doing what he can for himself and the planet. contact: tishi@yahoo.ca*

## 2010: Year of the tiger

Chinese New Year begins February 14

The old adage of why there is no cat in the animals of Chinese astrology is as follows. One day a long time ago, Buddha called on all the animals so that he would assign a year to the first 12 to arrive. The rat wouldn't wake up the napping cat who missed out getting a year assigned. That story is not true because tigers are cats. At 600 pounds, the Siberian tiger is the largest in the cat family. The tiger exemplifies a swift, aggressive, powerful force and 2010 is the year of the gold and silver white tiger.

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# This month's cover:

## A contextual reframing and some meandering thoughts on *Avatar* and the Internet

by Geoff Olson



THE DEFUNCT humour magazine *National Lampoon* once ran a regular feature called "Professor Kennelworth Explains the Joke." The professor dissected groaners about farmers' daughters and animals walking into bars. He parsed their structure and determined why they were funny. Of course, if you have to "explain" any joke, you're in trouble.

I feel a bit like Professor Kennelworth. On the way to production, this month's cartoon morphed into a cover. We gave a few people a preview of the image and it generated a lot of comment. Some loved it, some were indifferent and a few thought there was too much noise in the signal. But funny? More like attention getting.

The original cartoon makes the intent a bit more plain – BC's conservative premier has transformed into his erstwhile enemy: the "tax and spend liberal," who tosses money at megaprojects and leaves the taxpayer holding the bag. Campbell's introduction of the HST was the classic pig in lipstick – a tax said to be "revenue neutral" while impacting the wealthy less than the middle class, including small provincial businesses avowedly championed by the BC government. With one decision, Campbell

has managed to alienate both the left and the right.

And how can someone pitch their image as a carbon-taxing champion of the environment while simultaneously endorsing salmon farms and run-of-river projects? That must be every bit as confusing as being a disabled marine, waking up in the body of a 10-foot tall, blue humanoid with a tail. In terms of pop-culture memes, *Avatar*'s imagery is uppermost in peoples' minds these days – another reason it was made into a cover. Director James Cameron has created more than a lush, sci-fi allegory in 3D. It is a game-changer. This pricey production represents a tectonic shift in the arts and the culture as a whole.

How so? Let's look at the plot, without too many spoilers. Far from the strip-mined Earth, a mining corporation seeks out a new source of wealth and finds it on a Moon-world called Pandora. Unfortunately, the inhabitants insist on staying put, on top of an underground motherlode of "Unobtainium." In seeking a solution, the mining corporation, a kind of interstellar Halliburton, turns to its private security arm, a kind of interstellar Blackwater. A disabled ex-marine infiltrates the humanoids' society by taking on their form, in a genetically engi-

neered Na'vi body used as a remotely controlled device. But when he attains a deeper understanding of the Na'vi's fierce but united community, naturally embedded in their Pandoran environment, his sympathies change.

Cameron's film has caused a great deal of controversy for its themes on religion, race, the environment and foreign policy. Critics have included the Vatican, US marines, non-smokers and the politically correct. The film endorses a nature-based spirituality, a kind of pantheism inflected by complexity theory. It hints that our interconnections with other living things are the central foundation for our existence. It suggests that gnosis can take many different forms and that we are alike more than we differ. It defends the notion that peace is more desirable than war. It argues against the exploitation of others for profit and because it's technically feasible. And, as a film, it's one hell of a ride.

Such themes are rarely examined in mainstream media, in any significant depth, and when they are, they are often qualified, diminished or summarily rejected. Yet these are the same themes that are heavily endorsed in the alternative media, and especially on the Internet. Mainstream media, *cont'd pg. 30...*





# Mastering the basics

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

I HAVE ALWAYS felt there is a glaring omission in the way we have been educated and the way children are educated, inasmuch as there is no consistent teaching about how to communicate. Yes, we learn to read and write, but not how to talk with one another, particularly when there is conflict.

Built into our culture and socialization process is a tendency towards polarity. Siblings have rivalry and there are disagreements on the school playground. Generally, the response to these occurrences has more to do with who was right and who was wrong, rather than how communication could be improved.

## SPIRITUALITY

ments, but for how we treated others.

We need to teach them the importance of honesty and integrity – even when no one is looking. A conscience that is clear – free of guilt, remorse or regret – not only makes us feel better, but we sleep better too. Dishonest actions or being out of integrity is not something that can be erased. Most people carry the memory of such incidents for the rest of their lives.

We need to teach them the importance of forgiveness. No one is perfect. Everyone deserves a second chance. Holding grudges is like pausing a movie. You cannot move on with the

.....

**If we have not learned the language of co-operation and facilitation, we are stuck battling opposite positions or points of view. There are a few things we need to teach children, and, of course, one of the best ways to teach them is to model the behaviours ourselves.**

.....

In fact, the way we talk about things structures our reality. If we have not learned the language of co-operation and facilitation, we are stuck battling opposite positions or points of view. There are a few things we need to teach children, and, of course, one of the best ways to teach them is to model the behaviours ourselves.

We need to teach them it is always better to try to find a solution than to fight and argue. We must give them plenty of examples of solutions so they understand how to create their own. If they hear mom and dad doing this in the kitchen, it will be easier for them to do it on the playground.

We need to teach them it is not helpful or nice to speak badly of others. Rather, it is wise to encourage them to see the positives in others. They should know that words have energy and that negative comments put negative energy out into the world. We pollute the interpersonal environment when we do that.

We need to teach them if we work together and help one another, we will all be further ahead. We do not have to be the best, the fastest, the smartest. If we happen to have those qualities, all the more reason to be helpful to others. Years from now, we will be remembered not so much for our accomplish-

story when you remain stuck on one event.

We need to teach them that love is the greatest gift we have to give. They need to know that their love has the power to uplift, heal and empower others. They also need to be reminded that we each have unlimited amounts of love within us. Opening our hearts and letting the loving energy flow out to others is the best thing for maintaining physical and emotional health.

We need to teach them how important it is to share. They need to know how to take turns, to let everyone play and to give to those less fortunate. The whole world is our family and we need to take care of each other.

Can you imagine if we had an entire generation of children raised knowing these things? Imagine if every adult had been raised with these principles. How different our world would be. If we really want to change our world, it might best to start with the children. The only thing is if we want them to really get it, we have to get it first.

*Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books and CDs, visit [www.gwen.ca](http://www.gwen.ca) See display ad this issue.*

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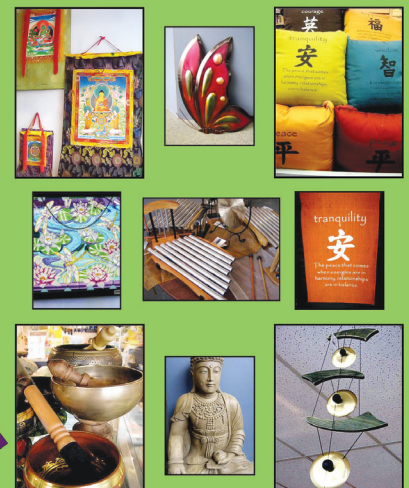
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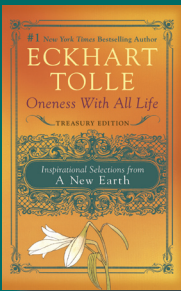
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# Urgency of transformation

**A NEW EARTH** Eckhart Tolle

## SPIRITUALITY

WHEN FACED with a radical crisis, when the old way of being in the world, of interacting with each other and with the realm of nature doesn't work anymore, when survival is threatened by seemingly insurmountable problems, an individual life-form – or a species – will either die or become extinct or rise above the limitations of its condition through an evolutionary leap.

It is believed that the life-forms on this planet first evolved in the sea. When there were no animals yet to be found on land, the sea was already teeming with life. Then, at some point, one of the sea creatures must have started to venture onto dry land. It would perhaps crawl a few inches at first, then, exhausted by the enormous gravitational pull of the planet, it would return to the water, where gravity is almost nonexistent and where it could live with much greater ease. And then it tried again and again and again, and much later would adapt to life on land, grow feet instead of fins, develop

consciousness did not happen because it was not yet imperative.

A significant portion of the Earth's population will soon recognize, if they haven't already done so, that humanity is now faced with a stark choice: Evolve or die. A still relatively small, but rapidly growing, percentage of humanity is already experiencing within themselves the breakup of the old egoic mind patterns and the emergence of a new dimension of consciousness.

What is arising now is not a new belief system, a new religion, spiritual ideology or mythology. We are coming to the end not only of mythologies, but also of ideologies and belief systems. The change goes deeper than the content of your mind, deeper than your thoughts. In fact, at the heart of the new consciousness lies the transcendence of thought, the newfound ability of rising above thought, of realizing a dimension within yourself that is infinitely more



lungs instead of gills. It seems unlikely that a species would venture into such an alien environment and undergo an evolutionary transformation unless it was compelled to do so by some crisis situation. There may have been a large sea area that got cut off from the main ocean where the water gradually receded over thousands of years, forcing fish to leave their habitat and evolve.

Responding to a radical crisis that threatens our very survival – this is humanity's challenge now. The dysfunction of the egoic human mind, recognized already more than 2,500 years ago by the ancient wisdom teachers and now magnified through science and technology, is, for the first time, threatening the survival of the planet. Until very recently, the transformation of human consciousness – also pointed to by the ancient teachers – was no more than a possibility, realized by a few rare individuals here and there, irrespective of cultural or religious background. A widespread flowering of human con-

vast than thought. You then no longer derive your identity, your sense of who you are, from the incessant stream of thinking that, in the old consciousness, you take to be yourself.

What a liberation to realize that the "voice in my head" is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that. The awareness that is prior to thought, the space in which the thought – or the emotion or sense perception – happens. Ego is no more than this: identification with form, which primarily means thought forms. If evil has any reality – and it has a relative, not an absolute, reality – this is also its definition: complete identification with form – physical forms, thought forms, emotional forms. This results in a total unawareness of my connectedness with the whole, my intrinsic oneness with every "other" as well as with the Source. This forgetfulness is original sin, suffering, delusion. When this delusion of utter separateness underlies and governs whatever I think, say, and do, what kind of world do I create? To find



the answer to this, observe how humans relate to each other, read a history book or watch the news on television tonight. If the structures of the human mind remain unchanged, we will always end up re-creating fundamentally the same world, the same evils, the same dysfunction.

#### A new heaven and a new Earth

The inspiration for the title of this book came from a Bible prophecy that seems more applicable now than at any other time in human history. It occurs in both the Old and the New Testament and speaks of the collapse of the existing world order and the arising of "a new heaven and a new earth." We need to understand here that heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness. This is the esoteric meaning of the word and this is also its meaning in

imposing a word or mental label on it, a sense of awe, of wonder, arises within you. Its essence silently communicates itself to you and reflects your own essence back to you. This is what great artists sense and succeed in conveying in their art. Van Gogh didn't say, "That's just an old chair." He looked and looked and looked. He sensed the Beingness of the chair. Then he sat in front of the canvas and took up the brush. The chair itself would have sold for the equivalent of a few dollars. The painting of that same chair today would fetch in excess of \$25 million.

When you don't cover up the world with words and labels, a sense of the miraculous returns to your life that was lost a long time ago when humanity, instead of using thought, became possessed by thought. A depth returns to

**What is arising now is not a new belief system, a new religion, spiritual ideology or mythology. We are coming to the end not only of mythologies, but also of ideologies and belief systems.**

the teachings of Jesus. Earth, on the other hand, is the outer manifestation in form, which is always a reflection of the inner. Collective human consciousness and life on our planet are intrinsically connected. "A new heaven" is the emergence of a transformed state of human consciousness and "a new earth" is its reflection in the physical realm. Since human life and human consciousness are intrinsically one with the life of the planet, as the old consciousness dissolves, there are bound to be synchronistic geographic and climatic natural upheavals in many parts of the planet, some of which we are already witnessing now.

#### Ego: The current state of humanity

Words, no matter whether they are vocalized and made into sounds or remain unspoken as thoughts, can cast an almost hypnotic spell upon you. You easily lose yourself in them, become hypnotized into implicitly believing that when you have attached a word to something, you know what it is. The fact is you don't know what it is. You have only covered up the mystery with a label. Everything – a bird, a tree, even a simple stone and certainly a human being, is ultimately unknowable. This is because it has unfathomable depth. All we can perceive, experience, think about is the surface layer of reality, less than the tip of an iceberg.

Underneath the surface appearance, everything is not only connected with everything else, but also with the Source of all life out of which it came. Even a stone, and more easily a flower or a bird, could show you the way back to God, to the Source, to yourself. When you look at it or hold it and let it be without

your life. Things regain their newness, their freshness. And the greatest miracle is the experiencing of your essential self as prior to any words, thoughts, mental labels and images. For this to happen, you need to disentangle your sense of I, of Beingness, from all the things it has become mixed up with, that is to say, identified with. That disentanglement is what this book is about.

The quicker you are in attaching verbal or mental labels to things, people or situations, the more shallow and lifeless your reality becomes, and the more deadened you become to reality, the miracle of life that continuously unfolds within and around you. In this way, cleverness may be gained, but wisdom is lost, and so are joy, love, creativity and aliveness. They are concealed in the still gap between the perception and the interpretation. Of course we have to use words and thoughts. They have their own beauty – but do we need to become imprisoned in them?

Words reduce reality to something the human mind can grasp, which isn't very much. Language consists of five basic sounds produced by the vocal cords. They are the vowels a, e, i, o, u. The other sounds are consonants produced by air pressure: s, f, g, and so forth. Do you believe some combination of such basic sounds could ever explain who you are or the ultimate purpose of the universe or even what a tree or stone is in its depth?

*Excerpted from A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle. Reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc. Copyright (c) Eckhart Tolle, 2005.*


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# Cuba

Creative, complex and contradictory

by Geoff Olson

and ready access to Soviet technology and aid. With the fall of the Soviet Union, 80 percent of Cuba's imports and exports – mostly with East Bloc nations – evaporated. Without Russian fuel, and still under the US trade embargo, the nation fell into crisis. Cuba's food production system collapsed and the average Cuban's caloric intake dropped 30 percent.

Then-president Fidel Castro euphemistically referred to this time of crisis, from 1990 to 1994, as the "Special Period." With only a trickle of fuel to transport the diminishing foodstuffs into the cities, Castro abandoned the top-down Soviet model for agriculture and called on urban Cubans to grow their own food on any available plot of land. The result was the largest program in sustainable and organic farming ever undertaken. It was goodbye to the centrally planned agricultural system, with its heavy energy inputs into machinery, oil, pesticides, herbicides and animal feed.

Today, 80 percent of Cuba's food production is organic. As of 2006, there were 10,000 urban gardens in Havana and other cities across the nation, according to the CBC documentary, *Cuba: The Accidental Revolution*. Schools, hospitals, seniors' homes and even factories grow these "organiponicoes."

The US/Canadian agricultural model takes 12 calories of energy to produce one calorie of food. Cuba produces 12 calories of organically grown food with one calorie of energy. Urban farmers use as little as five percent of agribiz energy inputs. The nation has also introduced privately owned farms and cooperatives, in effect incentivizing agriculture and making it an attractive career option for younger Cubans.

Gregory Biniowsky, a British Columbian lawyer and environmentalist, has lived in Cuba intermittently since 1993, working on Canadian-Cuban development programs. Sitting in his apartment in Old Havana's Malecon district, Biniowsky tells *Common Ground* that Cuba never had a subsistence economy under Soviet aid. "It was as mechanized as California's agricultural system. The cows gave milk as long as there was Russian cow meal. When that ran out, everything collapsed." Ironically, the Soviet approach mirrored the agribiz "Green Revolution" food production model of western nations.

During the "Special Period," Cuban agronomists and scientists learned how to feed cows with protein-heavy plant diets, and in the absence of pesticides, insects were bred to control pest infestations from other insects. Cuban doctors discovered natural plant remedies to replace some pharmaceutical drugs. Out of sheer necessity, Cubans began to work with nature rather than against it.

Despite some successes with adapting to the Soviet absence, the nation was still economically hamstrung by a relic from the Cold War, the US trade embargo. Western consumer items we take for granted, like pens, pencils and household tools, are still hard for some Cubans to come by, especially in rural areas. Dial-up Internet

... If we followed the way of possessions, we would have disappeared a long time ago. We Cubans are very fortunate. In that regard we are very small, but well, we are strong. We have learned to resist both the good and the bad. – Cuban musician Ibrahim Ferrer, Buena Vista Social Club, 1997

IT'S AN unnaturally cold, cloudy afternoon in Havana. Horse-drawn carriages and Pedicabs share the road with Plymouths, DeSotos, Studebakers and other pre-revolution antiques, which rumble along in loud defiance of Detroit's planned obsolescence. The busy street scene is embedded in a crazy quilt of architecture, from European Baroque to American neoclassical to Soviet brutalism. Most of the buildings appear to be in a state of elegant decay – and some not so elegant. Ornate light standards from the Batista era stand askew in The Capitol's plaza, where stray dogs lick themselves

and beg from tourists. The faces in the streets are white, black and mulatto and the fashions range from Miami chic to spontaneous grunge.

The Cuban travel experience is otherworldly. It's like falling into a Caribbean Stargate, constructed from rusting Russian tank parts, vacuum tubes and Marxist boilerplate, and stumbling out into a Terry Gilliam fever dream.

On the surface, Cuba would seem to have little to offer the rest of the world, other than a lesson in stubbornness and staying power – especially considering this nation of 11 million people is only 140 kilometres from its erstwhile enemy, the US. But with today's contentious issues of diminishing resources, food security and healthcare, Cuba may have a hard-won lesson for westerners about getting by in hard times.

The nation has already had its own "peak oil." Up until 1989, Cuba's superpower benefactor, the Soviet Union, granted the nation easy credit terms, cheap fuel



access is available at schools and universities, but otherwise limited. Yet the Cuban constitution still guarantees every citizen the “right to health protection and care.”

“It depends on how we want to evaluate Cuba,” says Biniowsky. “If you look at GDP, efficiency, sure. This is a centrally-planned bureaucratic economy, with lots of wastage.” But, by other measures, — being healthy, having a guaranteed place to live and having strong community networks — Biniowsky says Cuba is unlike other developing nations. He draws a comparison between Cuba and other Third World countries he has visited, where the social contract has been broken, resulting in mass suffering and Darwinian squalor. “Community has broken down because everyone is a competitor.

“I could see the fundamental difference between poverty and misery. There’s lots of poverty in Cuba. There’s no misery. In the Dominican Republic and Jamaica there’s rampant misery — misery being tarpaper shantytowns, kids with the swollen bellies, no doctors, rampant violence, corruption. That’s misery. Cuba is the only country that can boast that they have no street children. And we’re talking about tens of thousands of street children throughout Latin America.”

With the 1959 revolution, Castro’s peasant army chased out President Batista’s cronies, along with a clutch of Miami/Vegas-based mobsters. At that time, one quarter of the people were illiterate and half died before the age of 60. Cuba now has a 99.8 percent literacy rate, according to UNICEF statistics from 2007. The nation has the longest life expectancy and lowest infant mortality of any developing country. UNICEF’s figure for overall life expectancy for the average Cuban — 78 years — puts the nation on a par with the US.

Cuba also has more doctors per capita than any other country. General practitioners examine their patients twice a year, practising what they call “Integrated General Practice Medicine.” The focus is preventative medicine, and interpreting the patient as a whole person, rather than a patchwork of disconnected organs. In seeking treatment, Cubans have their choice of traditional or alternative medicine.

**T**he impact that Cuba has had on healthcare around the world is an incredible, and largely untold, story. At the Latin American School of Medical Sciences, described by *The Economist* as possibly the biggest medical school in the world, there were 10,000 to 12,000 students from between 27 to 29 countries enrolled in 2007. The students hailed from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. To be accepted, a student must be too poor to finance his or her own medical education. The Cuban government pays for all accommodations, books and training. In exchange, students agree to perform two years of community service in Cuba.

The school even accepts students from the US. IN 2006, 95 American students, unable to afford a medical education in their homeland, were enrolled in the school, according to the *Washington Post*. LASMS’s mission is to train general practitioners and primary healthcare providers for impoverished communities outside of Cuba. As of 2007, Cuba had 25,000 doctors in 68 countries. “We are learning that every human being has the right to be healthy,” Colombian native Daniel Phillip Marie told the *CBC* in halting English. “We are the army to help them. We have to be any place in the world, not with terrorism, not with war, but with help and care.”

Blame it all on Ernesto “Che” Guevara. While he isn’t much more than an iconic (and ironic) T-shirt character to westerners now, he remains a martyr figure to Cubans — a revolutionary doctor who believed healthcare was an essential part in liberating the world’s poor.

Cuba dispatched thousands of doctors to Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake, and to Southeast Asia after the 2004 tsunami. In 2005, Fidel Castro offered to fly 1,100 doctors into Houston, to provide medical attention to the victims evacuated from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Castro’s public offer included 26 tons of equipment, according to an online CNN report. “They brought a thousand doctors and mobilized them. They were assembled at a stadium, the airplanes were on the tarmac and the US turned them down,” says Biniowsky. (Actually, US officials simply ignored Castro’s offer.)

According to The Canadian Network on Cuba, at the time of the recent earthquake disaster in Haiti, “...402 Cuban internationalists, 302 of them medical personnel, had already been helping Haitians. These, together with many of the 500 Haitian doctors who had been trained in Cuba free of charge, formed the essential early group of lifesavers, attending to 1,102 Haitian patients in the first 24 hours after the earthquake.”

Through international medical and foreign aid programs, Cuba is focusing on a knowledge-based service sector. In a deal made with Hugo Chavez, Cuba has dispatched hundreds of doctors to the slum barrios of Venezuela in exchange for oil.

With its paradoxes and contradictions, Cuba is like a Latin American magical-realist novel, Biniowsky observes. The most potent symbol of the debauchery of the Batista era was the big burlesque show, yet Cuba

own chances to travel.

Maria, 47, is a Havana surgeon who lives with her teenage daughter in a sparsely furnished, small apartment that would not seem out of place in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. She told *CG* the government would not permit her to leave the country to visit her brother in Florida, for fear she won’t return. She can only travel internationally for medical conferences. Her father, now deceased, left Cuba for Puerto Rico when she was young. Her daughter has told her mother that if she can get a job overseas, she will not return. Maria may be facing old age alone, stranded in her homeland.

Ramon, 42, is a former mechanical engineer who has taken a more profitable job as a cab driver in the tourist district to support his family. Asked if he would ever consider leaving the country, he shakes his head sadly, saying it’s impossible, given the necessity of supporting his family. His eyes fill with tears. Most Cubans still support the goals of the revolution, he adds.

“There’s a lot of frustration in the general population to see more economic liberalism in terms of small businesses, notes Biniowsky. “Some old-school party members admit the biggest mistake of the revolution was to try to nationalize everything. They’re realizing that small businesses or medium sized businesses, whether they’re owned by cooperatives or privately, are much more efficient than a centrally planned economy. So

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**It’s this little, stubborn island that’s challenging the status quo, and it’s trying to think outside the box. It doesn’t have all the right answers, but the fact that it’s this kind of irreverent, rebellious little place that’s challenging the huge establishment of global capitalism is an attractive thing. — Gregory Biniowsky**

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has kept the Tropicana nightclub act going. The quintessential symbol of Wall Street fat cats is the giant stogie, yet the best producer of cigars in the world is the last communist holdout. Further, Cuba has the biggest collection of antique cars in the world and the national sport is baseball.

But it’s hardly a workers’ paradise. Cuba has an autocratic culture, with no free press to speak of. Private complaints about the leadership are tolerated, but public criticism is not. Dissenters are exiled, jailed or harassed. Neighbourhoods have citizens’ groups called “Committees for Defense of the Revolution” — snitch networks organized for the reporting of suspicious activities to authorities.

Doctors working in Cuba don’t make much more money than the average citizen: a meagre salary equivalent to \$15 to \$25 Canadian a month. Every Cuban is guaranteed spartan monthly food rations from the government, but lineups and shortages are the norm. The cramped, crumbling living conditions are initially shocking to the visitor. A housing shortage necessitates several generations living together under one roof and many Cuban couples are forgoing family as they wait for the elders to pass on. Eighty-five percent of Cubans own their own home, which can be inherited or traded, but not sold. The scarcity problems have increased in the past few years, several Cubans told *CG*, described by one as “frightening.” In many places, the Cuban infrastructure looks like it’s been picked up several feet off the ground and dropped down, hard.

Citizens must apply to their government for permission to travel, which is not always granted. “It depends which ministry you work for,” says Gabriella, 29, who works in the tourist industry and is dubious about her

Cubans want to see that economic liberalization happen sooner rather than later, but the government has been very slow doing that, because they’re afraid of the equity issues, and they’re also afraid a very radical change in their economic system will create instability. And they know the United States will take advantage of any opportunity to wreak havoc here.”

One source of instability is of the Cuban leadership’s own design. Once a playground for the wealthy comprador class, Varadero is now a string of all-inclusive hotels. Tourists from Canada, Europe and Asia get to party like it’s 1939. They dine at buffets, drink at poolside bars and recline on the beaches of the Caribbean coast.

Beginning in the seventies, in desperate pursuit of hard currency, the Cuban government ventured into the tourist market. In effect, they created a two-tiered economy. The first uses the standard peso. The second uses the new convertible peso, which is worth 25 times more, for the tourist market. The result has been a slow progression toward income disparities, with many Cubans seeking out jobs in the lucrative tourist industry. There is a thriving underground economy among the inventive citizens, who finesse the system and its paltry rations, to better themselves and their families.

Marx held that capitalism is eventually undercut by its internal contradictions, but the Cuban revolution has a few oddities of its own, if store window displays in Havana are any indication. Surely, there was no place in Marx’s “withering of the state” for a shirt that costs several months of a doctor’s wages. The nation in its geographic entirety is a contradiction. At the western end of the island, the socialist leadership does a cautious tango with capital, by maintaining a string of pleasure palaces for currency-loaded



# a Pacific Rim celebration grey whales & friends



by Jim Shinkewski and Marla Barker

**W**HO DOESN'T love whales? Who doesn't at least *like* marine mammals in some way? Given the popularity of events, research and the industry that often spotlight their peculiar lives and the high profile of BC's marine wildlife, it is safe to assume that many British Columbians have a soft spot for these remarkable mammals. Fortunately for us, we're on the doorstep of migratory corridors that offer the opportunity to witness the presence of an array of whales, dolphins and porpoises, as well as the annual migration of the world's largest population of California grey whales along our most west-coastal waters. We're talking upwards of

20,000 strong making their way from the warm calving and breeding lagoon waters off of the Baja toward the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Arctic north, often within viewing distance of shore.

Much more than a passing fancy on the part of humans for these majestic leviathans has generated the evolution of countless opportunities to explore their underwater world. The success of the whale watching industry – ever-present along the length of the BC coast, promoting tourism as well as encounters with whales – has led to a long list of regulations to ensure ethical viewing practices, initiated by both the government and individuals. Not all that long ago, whales were hunted up and down

the BC coast and when humans looked toward a spout spotted on the horizon, they wondered how many barrels of oil that whale would produce. Only a handful of decades later, we've come a long way to arrive at a place where our queries are much more empathetic, such as "Where do they live? How do they breathe? What do they eat?" The connection and understanding we are developing with whales has brought about the major change in the kind of interaction we seek with them. And we're not the only species looking for a whale of a time.

Let's consider the much less visible supporting cast in the grey whale ensemble. Who loves barnacles? Krill? How

about lice? You may be hard-pressed to find someone willing to attend the Pacific Rim Marine Lice Festival. We would, but we're among the kind of special geeks who love algae, plankton, aquatic worms and scientific nomenclature. Nonetheless, these not-so-charming organisms have very interesting stories and are important elements of marine mammal biology. An adult grey whale is an ecosystem unto itself, playing host to several species of parasites and hangers-on. Allow us to pull out the hypothetical magnifying glass for a moment.

The bumpy and calloused skin found on a grey whale's head is due to clusters of attached barnacles. These are not the familiar seashore barnacles found on virtually every solid surface in coastal environments; instead, they're a separate species similar in function and form. These barnacles are parasitic and embed themselves into their hosts' skin. It is thought these parasites cause little damage to the host whale beyond decreasing swimming efficiency, as a 40-ton adult grey whale carries up to one ton of barnacle weight. Since grey whales feed in the bottom sediments (and, as a result, are most often seen so close to shore), one side of the whale's face is scraped clean of these arthropod hitchhikers. Whichever side is barnacle-free is an indicator of whether a particular whale is 'right-handed' or 'left handed.' While there is no apparent advantage to favouring one side over the other, it is interesting to note that grey whales share this trait with humans and a few other mammals. It is not inconceivable to think these barnacle infestations are uncomfortable or itchy. Grey and

## 24th Annual Pacific Rim Whale Festival March 6 – 14

Throughout the coastal towns of Tofino and Ucluelet and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, the Pacific Rim Whale Festival Society throws open its doors to welcome whales, springtime and visitors alike in a "Celebration of Coastal Life," highlighting the annual spring migration of upwards of 20,000 grey whales. Enjoy live music, culinary competitions, children's fun-fairs, art, hands-on education and interpretive walks and talks. Explore the coastal temperate rainforest, hunt in tide pools and

come eye-to-eye with octopi in the Ucluelet Aquarium. Weave a cedar basket with Nuuchah-Nulth elders, join a researcher for a day-trip at sea with migrating grey whales, tour to Hot Springs Cove with a local biologist, or sink into a seat for the screening of a film with your family. Admire local artists in action, fill your ears with the stories of Roy Henry Vickers, or count spouts while walking the Wild Pacific Trail. Experience a unique and culturally powerful coastal tradition.

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- **Maritime Kids Days** - Fun & educational activities for all ages. Free live concerts with Gabriola's own The Kerplunks. (March 11 & 12).
- **Traditional Cedar Weaving:** Workshops with First Nations artists & weavers (March 11 & 13).
- **Ucluelet Aquarium season opening:** Up Close & Personal. (From March 6).
- **Inspiring Talks & Interpretive Walks:** (March 6-14).
- **Whale Watching Station & Interpretive Loop:** Amphitrite Point Lighthouse & Wild Pacific Trail. Join naturalists for interactive land-based viewing from this traditional whale-spotting point. (March 7).
- **Barnacle Blues:** David Gogo Live in Concert: A fundraising at Black Rock Oceanfront Resort. (March 11).
- **Martini Migration:** Feathers, Fur & Fins: Annual cocktail competition & fundraising affair featuring live music & fine food. (March 10).

For more info, including a calendar of events, visit [www.pacificrimwhalefestival.com](http://www.pacificrimwhalefestival.com)



humpback whales often scratch their barnacled heads on boat hulls and other solid surfaces in search of relief.

Adding to the discomfort are whale lice – small crustacean parasites living amongst the barnacle patches on the skin of grey whales. These creatures normally live their entire life cycle on a single grey whale, taking advantage of the whale's social nature to spread to neighbouring whale hosts. Although parasitic, the lice are not thought to cause damage or injury to their hosts; they are most interested in feeding on dead skin and remnants left over from the grey whale's enormous feeding gorges. In this sense, they could actually be helpful to their hosts in terms of grooming and exfoliating. These insect-like lice can each be as large as a two-dollar coin and they number in the thousands.

When a whale dies and sinks down to the sea floor, another specialized creature moves in to take advantage of the whale's

than science and political interests can easily override sound judgment when considering conservation concerns. Many once-valuable fish stocks have completely collapsed due to overfishing, and, as a result, the majority of the world's whale species has also felt the drastic effects in the food chain. Thankfully, the grey whales of North America's Pacific coast are a generally healthy stock, thanks to today's good conservation practices and the basic distaste Canadians have for commercial whaling.

Admittedly, it is easy to overlook the small and seemingly insignificant creatures when confronted with the enormity and charm of a grey whale. Nonetheless, these animals teach us much about how the ocean functions and about each species' position within it.

During their northbound migration, grey whales are relatively abundant and accessible for viewing off of Vancouver Island's west coast. If you have never

**We're on the doorstep of migratory corridors that offer the opportunity to witness the presence of an array of whales, dolphins and porpoises, as well as the annual migration of the world's largest population of California grey whales along our most west-coastal waters. We're talking upwards of 20,000 strong.**

abundant mass. The charmingly named, bone-eating snot flower worm, or zombie worm, is a bizarre mouthless deep-sea worm that appears to only survive by feeding on bones of whale carcasses. Given the relative rarity of whale falls over the entire sea floor, it is incredible that such a species can even survive on what amounts to tiny, habitable islands in a sea of emptiness.

All of this would not be possible without krill. Krill is an understated and important character in the marine-mammal food chain. Most of the world's largest whales include tiny krill in their diets. This small, shrimp-like animal schools in the tens of millions and contributes to a sizable proportion of the planet's entire biomass. A species of krill native to the Antarctic constitutes almost one percent of all living biomass on Earth. This may not seem like much, but consider the mass of all the trees, insects, marine mammals and every other living thing to gain a perspective of how much krill is in the oceans. Recently opened krill fisheries pose a new hazard to whale populations, as fishing so low on the food chain in such quantities could have serious repercussions to any species that feeds on krill or any of krill's predators.

These consequences are not to be taken lightly. Some people view fisheries management as more partisan alchemy

seen a whale in the wild, go. This migration brings overwintering adults and new calves on a remarkable journey driven by basic biological needs, in part using currents and sea floor features to navigate. For a few weeks each spring, grey whales pass by welcoming communities like Ucluelet and Tofino as part of their centuries-old routine, with their barnacles and lice along for the ride as always.

Each March, in an all-out celebration of coastal life, the Pacific Rim Whale Festival presents a platform of engaging talks, walks and learning opportunities to connect us to our lives and the lives of other creatures along the coast. Featuring guests from all over Canada and the Pacific Northwest, it's a volunteer-fuelled community event that packs a sizeable punch in the areas of education and quirky Canadian culture. Worth the road trip, and a guaranteed whale of a time – minus the parasites.

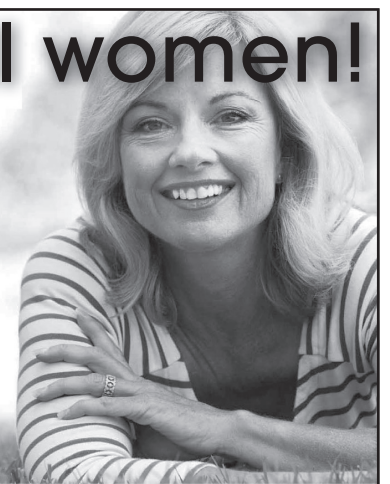
*Jim Shinkewski is a biologist and director with the Ucluelet Aquarium Society. Visit the Ucluelet Aquarium to learn more about the marine plants and animals of the west coast. (The aquarium re-opens March 6.) Marla Barker is a naturalist, adventure tour guide and coordinator for the Pacific Rim Whale Festival Society. Email her at [info@pacificrimwhalefestival.com](mailto:info@pacificrimwhalefestival.com).*

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- visiting [cancer.ca/bc/advocate](http://cancer.ca/bc/advocate)
- sending an email to your MLA
- joining "Pesticide Free BC" on Facebook

Pesticides used to enhance the look of our lawns and gardens are linked to an increased risk of cancer. This does not include pesticides used in agriculture and forestry.



**Canadian Cancer Society**

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON

**Deadline: February 15**





# Pesticide use should end

**EARTHFUTURE** Guy Dauncey

OVER THE millions of years of Nature's evolution, every kind of insect and bacterium has evolved, seeking its niche in the world. There are more than a million insect species and, sometimes, a gardener may believe that they are all trying to eat her roses.

No problem, however. We are clever. We can reach for the pesticides!

*Spray, spray, spray away,  
gently with the breeze.*

*Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
spray away disease.*

At first blush, the magic works. Your lawn is so immaculate you could invite the Queen to dine upon it. Isn't it amazing what modern science can achieve? But then your dogs start dying. They don't know you have sprayed your lawn and they romp and roll happily, finishing with a good licking to clean their paws.

Between 1975 and 1995, the incidence of bladder cancer in dogs examined at veterinary schools in North America increased six-fold, with Scottish terriers, Shetland sheepdogs, wire-haired fox terriers, and West Highland white terriers having a higher risk than mixed breeds. When the researchers

interviewed the owners of Scottish terriers with bladder cancer, they found that dogs whose owners had used phenoxy acid herbicides on their lawns were four

.....  
**Quebec, Newfoundland, PEI, New Brunswick and Ontario all have legislation banning the cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides, and right now – but only until February 15 – BC is gathering public feedback on its own proposed legislation.**  
.....

to seven times more likely to have cancer than dogs whose owners had not.

And then your children start getting cancer. A 1995 study by Jack Leiss and David Savitz published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that children whose yards were treated with pesticides were four times more likely to have soft-tissue sarcomas. Another study, by R. Lowengart, published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* in 1987, found that the parents' use of pesticides during pregnancy was linked to a three to nine-fold increase in childhood leukemia.

And then there are the golf courses, home to golfers who love the perfect green. When the ten-year-old Jean-Dominique Lévesque-René of Montreal was in hospital with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1994, with a 50 percent chance of surviving, he did some homework. First, he discovered that half the area where he had grown up on the Île Bizard had golf courses that were routinely sprayed with pesticides. He then learned that the herbicide 2,4-D, linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, had been

sprayed on their lawn every summer since he was a toddler.

While in hospital, he met other children with cancer and he built up a map of Quebec, showing where they lived. Twenty-two came from Île Bizard, where the golf courses were located, and when he worked the numbers, he discovered that their rate of childhood cancer was 37 times higher than normal. Thank you, merry golfers! When he left hospital, he became a persistent activist for by-laws to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides.

And this is where you come in. Que-

bec, Newfoundland, PEI, New Brunswick and Ontario all have legislation banning the cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides, and right now – but only until February 15 – BC is gathering public feedback on its own proposed legislation.

The Canadian Cancer Society, with a number of other organizations, is calling for legislation that will: 1) prohibit the use, sale and retail display of chemical pesticides for lawns, gardens and non-agricultural landscaping; 2) allow exemptions only to protect public health; 3) provide public education about the ban and alternatives to chemical pesticides; 4) include effective mechanisms for enforcement; 5) *exclude* the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which allows the use of pesticides as a last resort to deal with weeds and insects; 6) be passed in 2010 and fully implemented by 2012.

This is politics, however, and you can be sure that pesticide companies are lobbying for legislation that is weak and woolly. Please, for the sake of our children, our pets and ourselves, go to [www.advocate.ccsbcy.ca](http://www.advocate.ccsbcy.ca) and send an email to reinforce the Canadian Cancer Society's push; it has outlined its recommendations for a Cosmetics Pesticides Act on its website. Five minutes, that's all it will take.

*Guy Dauncey is the author or co-author of nine books, including Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic. He lives in Victoria. [www.earthfuture.com](http://www.earthfuture.com)*

## Water Beneath Our Feet Mapping the Spirit of the False Creek Watershed

presented by the False Creek Watershed Society

Are you interested in the history of False Creek? Would you like to creatively map your "home place"? This community mapping project offers the opportunity to participate in historical walks, community storytelling and a creative mapping workshop. If this mix whets your appetite, we encourage you to register for one of the two community mapping workshops and the three supporting events to gain the best experience of this unique project.

These events are all free. Donations will be accepted on historical walks. Please make sure to register for all events (event websites are noted after the individual events below) so we know how many to expect. For information on these events and to add your own photos and stories, please visit [www.mappingfalsecreek.com](http://www.mappingfalsecreek.com)

**March 13 – Historical False Creek Walk with Bruce Macdonald** (<http://mappingfalsecreek1.eventbrite.com>)

**March 20 – Musqueam Creek Walk - Vancouver's last wild salmon stream** (<http://mappingfalsecreek2.eventbrite.com>)

**March 27 – Community Sharing Workshop False Creek History** (<http://mappingfalsecreek3.eventbrite.com>)

**April 10 – Community Mapping Workshop - Emily Carr University** (<http://mappingfalsecreek4.eventbrite.com>)

**April 17 – Community Mapping Workshop - Roundhouse Community Ctr.** (<http://mappingfalsecreek5.eventbrite.com>)

**The Water Beneath Our Feet: Mapping the Spirit of the False Creek Watershed** is a creative, community mapping event, which will result in individual and composite maps that will be offered for viewing by the public. In the population-dense city of Vancouver, this project brings a cultural layer to the process of mapmaking by engaging the creative heart of our citizens to help them visualize their "home place." It offers an opportunity to map the way participants feel about the land where they live, play and work.

The process of mapping has been done by humans through countless centuries. Maps of trails, feeding grounds and seashores have been prominent in history books. Maps were one of the first images made by the explorers of the New World. Using as a guide the award-winning model created by BC artists and community leaders "Islands in the Salish Sea – a Community Atlas" (Heritage, 2005), [www.heritagehouse.ca/press\\_releases/salishsea\\_press.htm](http://www.heritagehouse.ca/press_releases/salishsea_press.htm), we would like to share the idea of mapping one's "home place" to the centre of Vancouver's False Creek. In so doing, we will encourage active and creative citizens, whose dialogues and collaborations about the significance of their home will enrich Vancouver's vibrant culture.

It was not that long ago that False Creek would have been lined with rocky shores, with abundant sea life and birds and its waters filled with fish, seals and killer whales. The forest behind would have been thick with conifers up to 1,000-years-old, home to bears, cougars and wolves and humming with the sounds of

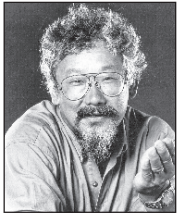
beaver, frogs, chipmunks and much more.

Today, although much biodiversity has been lost, the water is still there and some birds and sea life are still present. Many workshop participants will have visited other wilderness areas that offer some idea of what life in False Creek would have been like before the mid 1800's when the first logging began. We will be bringing back the memory of the time when what we now call False Creek was home place. The area provided rich sustenance for a thriving community of First Nations people and many plants and animals. We would like to help recreate a vision of this historical environment through maps, story, memories and painted and photographic images. Participants will choose what they wish to portray on their map and they will be encouraged to creatively link the past, present and future.

Our project is an excellent catalyst for the community to learn more about its history. In the short term, the artists and participants will benefit by making connections and working with community members who are concerned about the land and their local surroundings. In essence, we are trying to inspire and motivate a community that is surrounded by concrete and human-based reality. In the long-term, having deepened their understanding of the city's history by learning from the historians, artists and each other, the participants and artists will be able to further their own creative practices as well.

Participants from all walks of life are welcome. The projects will remain in the communities after they are completed.





# Earth needs an Avatar

**SCIENCE MATTERS** David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

## ENVIRONMENT

FOR MORE than 40 years, I've been involved in making television programs to educate people about science and the natural world. But people watch television in a desultory way, often interrupted by the need to help children with homework, let the dog out or go to the fridge for a beer or to the bathroom for a break. So we tune in and out, often forgetting whether we got a memorable factoid from *The Nature of Things* or *Grey's Anatomy*.

Movie audiences are different than those in TV land. For one thing, people have to make an effort to go to a theatre. They then must pay to watch, and once

All of the issues on this world are clearly the same as those on Earth when Europeans first contacted the indigenous people of the Americas, Africa and Australia. The invaders perceive the natives as ignorant, superstitious and cultureless beings with far less worth than their own. When the Earthlings learn that an ancient, immense tree, which is a sacred home to the native Na'vi, sits on a priceless resource, nothing is going to stop them from exploiting it.

The movie is over the top, as most fairy tales are, with its conflict between the good guys (the Na'vi and a few Earthlings) and bad guys (the rest of the Earth people), but it's a rip-snorter of an adventure when the good guys fight back with

**When the Earthlings learn that an ancient, immense tree, which is a sacred home to the native Na'vi, sits on a priceless resource, nothing is going to stop them from exploiting it.**

they start, they have to focus on the film. There are no commercial breaks. So the impact of watching movies is far greater than the impact of television viewing.

Years ago, while camping on the Serengeti in Africa with my family, I was astonished to meet three young Chinese-Americans, who, as I could see by their clothing alone, were clearly not seasoned campers. I asked what made them want to come and experience the wilderness. Their answer amazed me: "Because we saw *The Lion King*."

So even an animated film had such a powerful impact that these urbanites were motivated to set off on a wilderness adventure. For me, *Dances with Wolves* was a monumental experience, as it presented North American aboriginal people and their values in a way that was a big departure from the usual Hollywood stereotypes.

Which brings me to the latest movie blockbuster, James Cameron's *Avatar*. Some reports claim that Mr. Cameron has wanted to do an environmental film since he was 14-years-old. I don't know whether that story is apocryphal or not, but I do think he's produced an incredible film.

Of course, the 3-D effects are dramatic and charming, but the best part is that Mr. Cameron has created a world that is instantly compelling and believable, which is what good fairy tales do. The indigenous inhabitants of Pandora are clearly alien, but not so profoundly different that we can't identify with them.

flying reptiles (I'd give my right arm to have one of them!), six-legged horses and a host of other ferocious "beasts." I won't give away the ending, but I can say that I left the theatre very satisfied.

Right-wing commentators in the US and Canada have been apoplectic in their condemnation of *Avatar*. They say it is anti-American, depicts soldiers and corporations negatively, is anti-Christian, promotes paganism, and on and on. One of the more amusing comments came from someone who wrote a letter to the *Calgary Herald*, claiming, "This movie will be the undoing of our children. They will soon turn into a hive-mind of radical environmentalism – puppets of their master, David Suzuki." Talk about confusing fiction and reality!

One US "family" movie-review site says *Avatar* has "... an abhorrent, New Age, pagan, anti-capitalist worldview that promotes goddess worship and the destruction of the human race."

Of course, this anger is in reaction to the clear analogy of the Na'vi with North American natives – the way they've been exploited and the ignorance of the oppressors about the interconnectedness of everything in nature.

Sure, the movie has a great ecological message, but overall it's just a lot of fun. Please go and see it if you haven't already. I'm going to watch it again – and again!

Learn more at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

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# four myths about Marriage

by Claire Maisonneuve

## **Myth #1: Resolving your conflicts is the key to a happy marriage.**

Unfortunately not, since most marital arguments can never be resolved! After 30 years of research on what makes marriage work, psychologist John Gottman reveals that, in all marriages, happy or unhappy, 67 percent of all problems are never resolved.

All marital conflicts fall into two categories: either they are 'solvable' and can be resolved or they are 'perpetual,' which means they will be part of your relationship in some way or another forever.

The reason for this is that most perpetual conflicts are rooted in fundamental differences of lifestyle, personality or values. Rather than trying to change each other on these issues, happy couples learn to understand what those differences mean to each other and learn to live with them. In happy marriages, partners keep acknowledging the problems and are willing to continue dialoguing about them in ways that are respectful and honouring.

Perpetual conflicts can include issues related to differences in religious convictions, the frequency of sexual desire, the need to have the house tidy and the desire to have kids or not.

In unhappy marriages, spouses get entrenched in their position on the matter, become unwilling to budge and don't care to try and understand each other's point of view. It's as if their position on the matter becomes more important than their partner's feelings and wellbeing. Couples become gridlocked and this can lead to emotional disengagement.

Effective conflict resolution skills won't do much if you feel contempt and resentment towards each other. Gottman's research reveals that what's most important is not simply how you handle your disagreements, but how you are with each other when you're not fighting.

The key is that partners need to feel like they are accepted for who they are and have a fundamental sense of fondness and admiration for each other.

## **Myth #2: Problems of sexual desire or other sexual difficulties means there is something wrong with your marriage or that you're falling out of love.**

According to David Schnarch, expert sex therapist, every couple will have some sexual problem at some point in their marriage. Sexual problems are normal and so is their impact. The problem is that most couples don't understand what's happening to them. They may find



## **Effective conflict resolution skills won't do**

**much if you feel contempt and resentment towards each other.**

**Gottman's research reveals that what's most important is not simply how you handle your disagreements, but how you are with each other when you're not fighting.**

it hard to talk about their sexual difficulties or not even know what to say about them, let alone admit they are having problems with sex.

Resolving sexual difficulties is more than just new positions and techniques. It requires looking at the ways you and your partner operate in your emotional relationship. As Schnarch describes it, our genitals are connected to who we are and so healing sexual difficulties requires a personal look into our anxieties, insecurities, disappointments, resentments and needs for autonomy and dependency.

Our sexuality is directly related to a complex set of beliefs and feelings about ourselves and the other. In his book *Resurrecting Sex*, Schnarch quotes three simple truths about sexual problems:

There are often no simple answers or solutions.

You don't need easy or simple solutions; you just need solutions that really work.

A solution that's an emotional stretch for you and your partner is often the best solution to your problem.

Unfortunately, sexual difficulties can lead to divorce or emotional alienation. On the other hand, the commitment to resolving these issues can open

a doorway to a better way of being and greater self-respect and also take your relationship to new heights of maturity and partnership.

## **Myth #3: Affairs are the major cause of divorce.**

A large survey of divorced men and women, conducted by Gigy and Kelly in a study entitled the "California Divorce Mediation Project," reported that the major cause of divorce (80 percent of the time) is that partners became emotionally distant, lost a sense of closeness and drifted apart. Only 20 to 27 percent of couples said an extramarital affair was even partially to blame for their divorce.

When a marriage is in trouble or en route to divorce, it makes people vulnerable and causes them to look for intimate connections outside of the marriage. People look to others for what they feel they are not getting in their own marriage, including understanding, attention, caring and support. Hence, an affair is generally a symptom of a troubled marriage. In hindsight, divorced people often recognize that they took their spouse and their relationship for granted. They didn't recognize its value until it was too late.

## **Myth #4: Children will solidify your marriage.**

Studies have shown that one of the major causes of marital dissatisfaction and eventual divorce is the birth of the first baby. A longitudinal survey of 130 newlywed couples, followed over eight years by John Gottman, revealed 67 percent of couples underwent a precipitous drop in marital satisfaction the first time they became parents.

However, Gottman's survey also revealed the other 33 percent did not experience this drop; in fact, half of them even reported that their marriage had never been better. What is the secret to this transition? According to Gottman, what separates these couples has little to do with lack of sleep, feeling overwhelmed, juggling motherhood with a career, lack of time for oneself or a colicky baby. Rather, it has to do with whether or not the husband experiences and participates in this transformation to parenthood along with his wife – or he gets left behind.

Indeed, a husband may find it difficult to keep up with the changes that his wife goes through during this period. He may feel abandoned by his wife and deprived by the baby's overwhelming and seemingly endless need for mother and he may begin to withdraw. On the other hand, mother may sometimes find it difficult to include father in the care of the baby (casting herself as the only expert) or in acknowledging the loss felt by her husband.

The quality of a couple's friendship before the birth, the husband's ability to enter into and participate in this new dynamic and mother's invitation and understanding will all determine if the marriage thrives or suffers.

While the happily-ever-after scenario presented in fairy tales and movies may seem attractive, buying into myths about marriage can create unrealistic expectations and lead to disappointment, confusion and alienation. If you can learn to separate the truth from the Hollywood fiction, you can recognize a positive relationship when you have one and avoid sabotaging an otherwise good partnership.

*Claire Maisonneuve is a registered clinical counsellor with a Master's degree in counselling psychology and the director of the Alpine Anxiety & Stress Relief Clinic in Vancouver. For the last 19 years, she has specialized in working with individuals and couples. 3126 W. Broadway, 604-732-3930, [www.AnxietyAndStressRelief.com](http://www.AnxietyAndStressRelief.com)*



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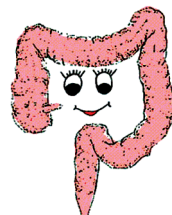


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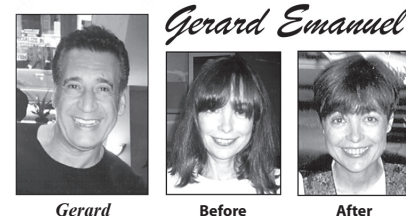


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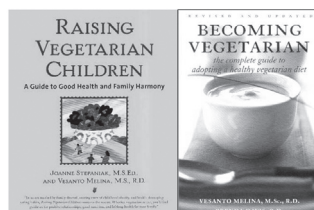


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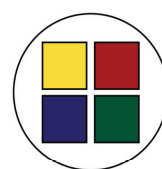
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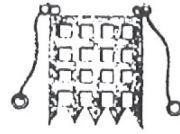
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 – Anne-Sophie Swetchine

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# Community media money

## Where is it going?

INDEPENDENT MEDIA Steve Anderson

### CULTURE

...Olson - from p.12

**P**RIOR TO the deregulation of community TV in 1997, all Canadian communities with 2,000 cable subscribers or more enjoyed access to a cable-operated community TV channel. Some communities even had a vibrant network of volunteer media makers, such as the 1,200 or so volunteers across 12 regional offices throughout Vancouver's Lower Mainland. The resources for community TV came from a broadcast levy collected by cable companies, and which was considered a public trust.

#### Dipping into the emptiest pockets

However, in the last 13 years, cable companies have altered community channels and the levy that supports

interests. This community money should be used to create an innovative, independent media sector in Canada and provide much needed resources for underserved communities and at-risk youth. That some of the most profitable companies in Canada are taking public resources from those most in need is outrageous and must be challenged.

#### The missing report

The CRTC is currently reviewing community media in Canada and taking back this public money could pave the way for an historic opportunity. A proposal by CACTUS (Canadian Association of Community Television Users and Stations) is calling for the millions of dollars

formed part of the public record when the community TV hearing was called. The study's author, Catherine Edwards, is an international community TV expert and her report provides essential information for public participation.

According to the CRTC website, it removed the report because of "concerns" by licensees of broadcasting distribution undertakings (AKA 'Big Cable'). This decision appears to be in response to a letter dated December 10, 2009, sent by Rogers Communications, Shaw Communications, Cogeco Cable, EastLink and Quebecor Media, asking for the report to be removed. The CRTC's willingness to bend to the concerns of a few clearly biased companies draws into question the CRTC's independence from the cable industry.

OpenMedia.ca has posted the report online at [www.openmedia.ca](http://www.openmedia.ca), but it should also be part of the public proceeding.

#### Watchdog for whom?

The CRTC's website indicates there are 139 cable-operated community channels in Canada, but gives no further information. We don't know who owns them, where they are located or what their programming consists of.

As far as I can tell, the problem is that despite complaints from community TV organizations, the CRTC is not actually monitoring or supervising community TV activities. The CRTC doesn't even appear to be collecting programming logs so how can it possibly review them?

'Big Cable' has been given unfettered access to more than \$100,000,000 of our money and the CRTC has seemingly provided little oversight. But this situation isn't new; over the past 10 years, an estimated \$800,000,000 has flowed through this fund.

The best way to get out of this mess is to liberate the community media funds straight to community media organizations. Cable companies have shown themselves to be unfit in the role of middlemen and the CRTC has shown itself incapable of ensuring that funds are directed towards their intended purpose.

Canadians can ask for the funds to be given back to communities by sending a comment to the CRTC here: [www.openmedia.ca/action](http://www.openmedia.ca/action)

*Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for the Campaign for Democratic Media. He has written for The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times and Adbusters. [steve@democraticmedia.ca](mailto:steve@democraticmedia.ca), [www.FacebookSteve.com](http://www.FacebookSteve.com), [www.SteveOnTwitter.com](http://www.SteveOnTwitter.com)*

and their increasingly antiquated point of view, are in retreat. *Avatar* is following the belief-systems of a new generation that is getting the vast amount of its news, information and entertainment on the web. Hollywood is tracking its future audience and James Cameron has thrown its weight with the young, to the tune of a half-billion dollars. It's a gamble that's already paid off at the box office.

The authoritarians in the military and organized religion can scream all they want, but it's too late to close the barn doors. The Internet – a mixed bag of blogs, videos, online gaming, porn, rabble-rousing, B2B and B2C services – is getting too big and profitable to control in its entirety, along with belief systems that depart in radical ways from both secular and religious norms. Even if the powers that be want to put a saddle on this distributed intelligence, there are 12-year-olds out there who can launch bots, find proxies and penetrate firewalls with a few keystrokes. For good or bad, the young will always be faster and better than the old in this milieu.

The balding guardians of the status quo are losing control. It's happened before, most notably during the Gutenberg Revolution when the first printed bibles became available to the Christian flock. The church no longer had an exclusive hold over scripture, which could be freely interpreted by anyone capable of reading.

There is good and bad in all of this. The traditional print media – at least in terms of newspapers – is on the way out. Bookstores are failing and the broadsheets are flailing. Steve Jobs' announcement of Apple's iPad has brought speculation that this will save the old-school news and book business. But when significant numbers of publications pull up stakes in the ink-and-paper world and decamp to cyberspace, they are on the same playing field as 911truth.org and lolcats.com, where the old models for mass persuasion and marketing no longer hold. There's an entire generation that's been raised on getting their information for free. That's the world traditional media is going to have to navigate, one where you can't sell to people who aren't interested in buying. (Especially if it's more political platitudes about war on the planet and its people.)

The print world won't be entirely demolished by this Permian-style event – but there will be much extinction among the dinosaurs. *Avatar* is all about the tree shrews. So are we.

[www.geoffolson.com](http://www.geoffolson.com)

**In 2008, cable monopolies earned a profit of 25 percent, before interest and taxes. Irrespective of these earnings, they are using public trust money, partially earmarked for the most marginalized in our society, for their own commercial interests.**

them; they are now used as a competitive advantage rather than a community resource. This represents a serious misuse by cable companies of the roughly \$100,000,000 of public trust funds (\$116,000,000 in 2008).

In 2008, cable monopolies earned a profit of 25 percent, before interest and taxes. Irrespective of these earnings, they are using public trust money, partially earmarked for the most marginalized in our society, for their own commercial

already being collected by cable companies for community TV to be liberated to independent media centres. These media centres would serve to empower citizens and facilitate media innovation and the CRTC can make this a reality.

Recently, it was brought to my attention that a report detailing community channel policy around the world – "Community TV Policies and Practices Worldwide" – has been removed from the CRTC website. This missing report

### Take the OpenMedia.ca survey

OpenMedia.ca is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to advance and support an open and innovative communications system in Canada. We are currently envisioning our direction and you have a unique opportunity to help define OpenMedia.ca's work in 2010 and beyond.

It's an exciting time for communications in Canada. We need an organization and a network of organizations that is focused on advancing and supporting an open and innovative communications system in Canada. We need your input to succeed. Take our "OpenMedia.ca Where To?" survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/QL85KKW](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QL85KKW)

– The OpenMedia.ca team



# Performances redeem Tolstoy's story

## FILMS WORTH WATCHING

Robert Alstead



Sofya Tolstoy (Helen Mirren) and Leo Tolstoy (Christopher Plummer). Stephan Rabold photo, courtesy Sony Pictures Classics.

AS COSTUME dramas go, *The Last Station* is perfunctory and sags in the middle. Set in the last year of Leo Tolstoy's life, it dramatizes the battle between the author's wife Sofya and the leaders of the Tolstoyan Movement – which the writer founded – over the rights to his works. The tussle over intellectual property rights has obvious contemporary resonance, even though the film is set exactly a hundred years ago in pre-revolutionary Russia. But although Christopher Plummer and Helen Mirren, as the volatile couple, provide fireworks and humour, the theme is found wanting.

We meet ageing Count Leo Tolstoy – a sage-like Christopher Plummer, wearing a long, white beard – surrounded by family and acolytes on his lavish country estate. Having earned international literary stardom, the author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* is about to renounce his title, home and his tempestuous wife in favour of the Tolstoyan Movement he founded to promote social equality and passive resistance. However, Tolstoy's wife Sofya, a fiery Dame Mirren, believes that, after 48 years of marriage and 13 children, the estate should fall to their family.

The conspiring leader of the movement, Vladimir Chertkov (Paul Giamatti), fearing Sofya's influence and power over his affections, dispatches the naive Tolstoyan Valentin Bulgakov (James McAvoy, not altogether convincing in the part) to assist and spy on the author. Bulgakov's own loyalties are tested as his hero starts confiding in him about his inner struggle to follow his own ideals and Bulgakov's values are also tested in an affair with the down-to-earth Masha (an assured Kerry Condon).

The production notes state that

some of Tolstoy's descendants acted as advisers throughout the production and it's clear early on where writer-director Michael Hoffman's sympathies lie. Giamatti's moustache-twirling character is painted as the arch-villain of the piece, coming across as a conniving snake, as he urges Tolstoy to leave his work "for the Russian people." The goals of the movement, whatever they are, are only loosely touched upon, and in a way that is loaded with suspicion or, in the case of Bulgakov, deemed

impossibly romantic.

The redeeming quality of *The Last Station* is the performances by Plummer and Mirren, who are given free reign over the subject matter. Plummer's mumbling, grumbling, pensive performance, interspersed with moments of explosiveness and lucidity, gives a good sense of his character's inner turmoil. But it is Mirren who really lets rip, one minute fainting and the next throwing crockery around in a histrionic fit. In her quieter moments, she's

also a master of the barbed put-down and bed-chamber playfulness. Fans of the two actors will get something from the film for the performances alone. That, and the attractive period visuals, even if the story is a plod.

One last thing; much has been written about the appropriateness of Plummer's long, white beard. There are a few snippets of original archive footage at the end of *The Last Station* and, yes, Tolstoy had a big, white beard typical of the era.

*Love & Savagery* (out February 5) is a tale of forbidden love where spiritual ideals do battle with earthly desires. I haven't seen the film, but it sounds intriguing. It is 1969 and poet-cum-geologist Michael McCarthy (Allan Hawco) travels from his native Newfoundland to Ireland's west coast to study the Burren, a rugged landscape known for its limestone terraces. In a nearby village, he and a beautiful waitress named Cathleen (Irish actor Sarah Greene) are inescapably drawn to each other, although she is about to become a nun. Compounding Michael's problems, the local townsfolk are determined to keep the two apart, even resorting to physical violence. Will Cathleen choose the love of a man or the love of God?

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary *You Never Bike Alone*. [www.youneverbikealone.com](http://www.youneverbikealone.com). He writes at [www.2020Vancouver.com](http://www.2020Vancouver.com)

## Wild at Heart:

### The Films of Nettie Wild

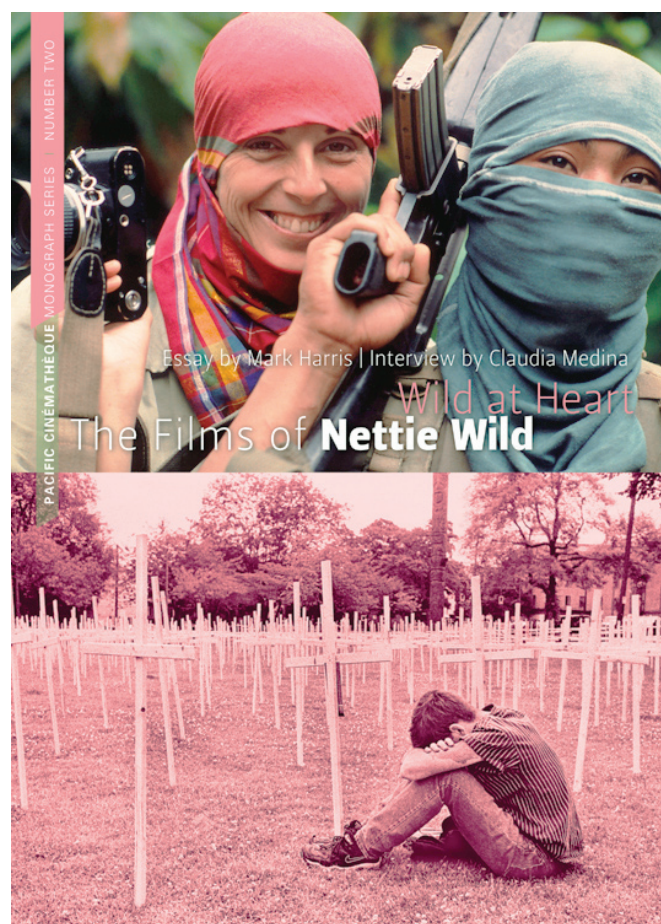
IN JANUARY, the Vancouver Film Critics Circle awarded Nettie Wild and Vancouver International Film Festival founder Leonard Schein with the Achievement Award for Contribution to the British Columbia Film Industry.

Ms. Wild's work and interests span the globe and also encompass issues of regional interest to the broader Western Canadian/British Columbian community. From the Zapatista revolution in Mexico to a Native standoff in BC to street nurses working with addicts in Vancouver, acclaimed documentary filmmaker Nettie Wild plunges into the heart of politically volatile events and emerges with a portrait of their core issues. Both *FLX* and *A Place Called Chiapas* won Genies for Best Canadian Feature Documentary and all of her films have been widely distributed in cinemas across North America.

Notable amongst the many honours she has received for her body of work, in addition to her two Genie Awards, are major retrospectives at the Hot Docs festival and the Ontario Cinematheque.

For details about Nettie Wild's work, including her awards, visit [www.canadawildproductions.com](http://www.canadawildproductions.com)

Anvil Press is pleased to launch *Wild at Heart: The Films of Nettie Wild*. (Text by Mark Harris; interview by Claudia Medina; series editor, Brian Ganter.)





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**FEB 6**

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**FEB 11**

**My Nuclear Neighbour** premieres on CBC Television's The Nature of Things with David Suzuki ([www.cbc.ca/docs](http://www.cbc.ca/docs)) Thursday, February 11, 8pm, (8:30 NT). Imagine that one morning you wake up to find out your nearest neighbour may be a nuclear power plant. This is the story about two women searching for answers.

**FEB 12-14**

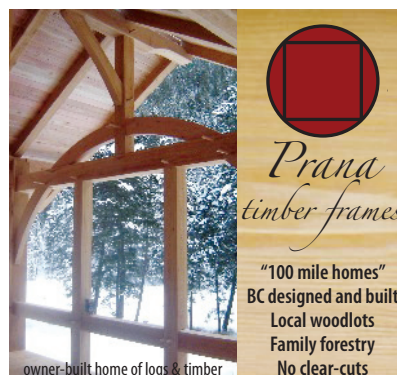
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**FEB 13**

**Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle:** Sat, 7-10pm. 'Dreamtime Journeywork' for insight/healing with your Nature Spirit guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254, W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636. [www.shamanichealing.info](http://www.shamanichealing.info)

**FEB 13**

**Vancouver Olympic Inner Peace Walk** "Pause for Peace" - 9:30AM gather at 33rd & Cambie St. 10:30AM Meditation & Song at the top of Little Mountain, Queen Elizabeth Park, @ the fountains. More info [www.olympicpeace.org](http://www.olympicpeace.org)



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**FEB 27**

**Seedy Saturday:** A celebration of heirloom varieties, organic gardening and sustainable urban agriculture. Helping gardeners get off to a good start for more than 20 years. Produced by the Master Gardeners' Association of BC. Showcasing more than 30 exhibitors with an emphasis on supporting urban agriculture, including seed sales by growers of organically produced (untreated, open-pollinated and non-GMO) heirloom and heritage varieties. Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden (5251 Oak St, Vancouver), 10am to 4pm. Photo courtesy of VanDusen Botanical Garden.

**FEB 13-14**

**Basic and Advanced Vertical Reflexology Therapy Courses** \$350. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. [www.pacificreflexology.com](http://www.pacificreflexology.com)

**FEB 21**

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**FEB 26**

**Introduction to Foot Reflexology** commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7.30 pm \$10, Course \$350. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. [www.pacificreflexology.com](http://www.pacificreflexology.com)

**FEB 28**

**Living Ch'an Workshop** - Whether you are stressed or seeking contentment in life, please join us for a FREE, one-day workshop whose goal is to improve the quality of one's life. 8240 No. 5 Road,

Richmond, @9:30-4PM. 604-831-8223; [chan@ddmba.ca](mailto:chan@ddmba.ca)

**FEB 28**

**Meditation for Planetary Peace** on the Full Moon, Sunday, February 28th at 7:30 PM. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. [www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm](http://www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm)

**MAR 6-14**

**Pacific Rim Whale Festival:** Ucluelet and Tofino. Whale watching, workshops, live music, presentations, Chowder Chowdown, Ucluelet Aquarium, The Wild Pacific Trail, Maritime Kids Days and more. Info: [www.pacificrimwhalefestival.com](http://www.pacificrimwhalefestival.com)

**MAR 20-21**

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**MAR 27**

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# Classified

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**SOS (Science of Spirituality):** See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. [www.sos.org](http://www.sos.org)

## TUESDAYS

**Reflexology Student Clinic** 6-10pm. One-hour sessions \$20. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818.  
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## WEDNESDAYS

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...Cassels from p. 7

Initiative" (DNDI) signed an agreement to create treatments for human African trypanosomiasis (HAT) (also known as sleeping sickness), visceral leishmaniasis (VL) and Chagas disease. These parasitic diseases afflict many in the developing world and Pfizer will offer the researchers access to a huge library of novel chemical entities so they can start screening for compounds that could form the basis of new treatments.

In terms of one of the world's biggest killers, malaria, the World Malaria Report (2008) reported there were as many as 247 million cases of malaria across the globe. In light of this epidemic, the drug company GlaxoSmithKline is opening up access to an extensive dataset on 13,500 compounds, which could be potential malaria fighters. These data are on chemical entities that have been tested against the Plasmodium parasite

that causes malaria and researchers will use it to help isolate those compounds most likely to work.

These are all very important developments and even as we may one day see research and development for neglected diseases becoming the highest of priorities – and the gross inequity in the health of the world's population starts to shrink – we shouldn't just sit here and wait for things to happen.

Let's get cracking on exporting toilets and importing diseases. While improving access to clean water and sanitation can improve the fundamental building blocks of any healthy nation, let's see a little more tuberculosis and malaria in North America and stimulate our research enterprises where, at the end of the day, the inequity of healthcare will shrink even further.

Just a thought.

...Cuba from p. 15

tourists. At the eastern tip of the province of Guantanamo, the US maintains a concentration camp for alleged terrorists, on land they've staked under a disputed 99-year lease.

The half-century long US economic blockade, which began under the Kennedy administration, is not the only source of Cuba's economic troubles – but it's a huge factor. (Imagine how well Canada would perform if the US suddenly declared a trade embargo). What would the Cuban experiment look like today without US intransigence? We'll never know, though many Cubans are hopeful that more private initiatives, both foreign and domestic, can work alongside the ideals of social welfare embodied in Castro's revolution.

Yet the old guard are fearful of losing control of the revolution, and understandably so. According to writer Fabian Escalante, there have been many documented instances of state-sponsored terrorism over the years against Cuba, including an alleged 638 assassination attempts against Fidel Castro. Some of the early CIA assassination attempts were worthy of a Pink Panther film. These included placing an explosive device activated by remote control inside a seashell left inside in an area frequented by Castro, and a gift of a diving suit impregnated with toxic substances.

Given the past dangers, and Washington's refusal to remove Cuba from its list of terrorist nations, the aging Castro brothers' hermit crab lifestyle seem more practical minded than paranoid. On a tour of Havana, I asked Gabriella where the aging ex-president resides. "No one knows," she replied with a shrug. "He goes from house to house."

With all its contradictions, cock-ups and cautious concessions to a global economy, the Cuban revolution stumbles on, only 90 miles from the Florida Keys. In a long-running, real-world

*Survivor* series, Fidel Castro has somehow managed to outlast and outplay 10 US administrations and outlive six US presidents. A succession of Caesars have been voted out, with Fidel and his brother Raul left standing on the island they conquered back in the Sputnik era, with a rebel army that grew from 12 to 10,000. Who could have ever predicted such a turn of events? Cuba is like the most unlikely reality television production ever conceived, or a bizarre mash-up of a Tom Clancy potboiler and Gabriel Garcia Márquez fantasy. But the Castro brothers will not live forever.

Through sheer necessity, Cuba has become a crucible for sustainability: a test case of how to survive without mortgaging costs into the future, whether monetary or environmental. The economic blockade may have even had a silver lining. Freezing Cuba out of the IMF and the World Bank may have allowed the nation to adapt itself to crises without racking up ruinous debts to outsiders.

Gregory Biniowsky and his wife Dane have a brand new daughter, Savannah, and he is obviously betting on a better future for the island. "Through the process of living here and living like a Cuban, and going through all the hardships, the long lineups, the shortages and bureaucracy, and all those other things that are difficult, I became less romantic about the Cuban revolution," he observes in *The Accidental Revolution*.

"...But it's this little, stubborn island that's challenging the status quo, and it's trying to think outside the box. It doesn't have all the right answers, but the fact that it's this kind of irreverent, rebellious little place that's challenging the huge establishment of global capitalism is an attractive thing, and I want to live here and be here and see how this David and Goliath battle turns out."

[www.geoffolson.com](http://www.geoffolson.com)

# On Track Zodiac



FEBRUARY 2010 Adrien Dillon



**ARIES** (Mar 21 – Apr 19)

Business is booming and you feel like the king or queen of the county. With an increased sense of aliveness, passions run high to get the job done. It's about your livelihood and playing the game with vigour. You simply want to dance throughout the boardroom and ignite a fire in everyone.



**TAURUS** (Apr 20 – May 21)

Temper, temper dear Taurus. Perhaps de-stress now rather than pouring gasoline on an already healthy fire. Time to change the system from within. What is it that begins and ends with you? The idea to live and eat well. Rejuvenate your attitude towards health and gain an optimum advantage.



**GEMINI** (May 22 – Jun 20)

Fretting about a decision between direction and timing? Is taking a gamble and facing yet more risk creating a ringing in your ears? To feel like a prisoner of love while captivated by your own vivid imagination may mean it is time to drop all desire and take a break from all things imagined.



**CANCER** (Jun 21 – Jul 22)

This is a good time for a retreat, a nice comforting spa or a private get-away. Watching nature peel away another layer, you question the path you are on. Your desire to discard worn-out, archaic ways and means has you accepting yourself and yet preparing for renewal. Simple is the way home.



**LEO** (Jul 23 – Aug 22)

Have you been lured, perhaps seduced, into a game or area that has carried you away with it? You could find yourself in places unknown and encountering more of the mysterious side of life. Lose yourself in experience. Floating and transporting. Joie de vivre.



**VIRGO** (Aug 23 – Sep 22)

Creativity may be high and yet you could feel that you are alone in a crowd and drifting. As the saying goes, though, "Don't give it another thought" because all that is soon going to change. Get ready for some sweeping changes as you hit the bottom only to soar to higher places.



**LIBRA** (Sep 23 – Oct 22)

The holiday you crave could have its roots in love and comfort. It's not from a sense of discomfort that you wish to go it alone, but rather to realign yourself with the deepest of your hopes and wishes. You wish to explore the marrow of your heart.



**SCORPIO** (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

Shall you pack it in, give it up and throw in the proverbial towel? Are you feeling like a quitter? Perhaps you feel as though things make no sense to you and life, as you knew it, held more significance. The house of cards may tumble, but it only signifies a great new start.



**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Laughter is the medicine in which your heart delights. You could be having the time of your life now and your days are full of frivolity. You bring levity to most situations as a way of setting everyone free and it is the great healer that is required in your widening circle.



**CAPRICORN** (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

Add a tiny smack of friction and a dash of impatience and you have the perfect recipe for resistance and setback. It's time to foster some good relations and change the way you handle your business associates. What goes well with celebration? Will it be humble pie or champagne?



**AQUARIUS** (Jan 20 – Feb 19)

Has the language of love left you stony-grey, tongue-tied and twisted? Look in the mirror and find what messages you are sending out that give you strange responses to your gestures of need. You're the alchemist.



**PISCES** (Feb 20 – Mar 20)

Restlessness is stirring; a desire to branch out and break free from any self-imposed limits now beckons. This is the beginning of a very lucky and free-flowing time. Many beneficial people come your way offering more than you thought possible.

Adrien Dillon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 34 years experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, [adrien.dillon@gmail.com](mailto:adrien.dillon@gmail.com).



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